

# The National Parks--America's Special Places

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### Objectives:

By the end of this unit, the student will be able to--

- describe the purpose of the National Park Service.
- name the country which came up with the idea of National Parks.
- describe what is special about Fort Matanzas and/or the Castillo de San Marcos.
- name at least one other National Park area in Florida and tell why it is important.

### Materials:

A copy of the student reading page and questions for each student. Map of the United States, map of Florida

### Florida State Standards addressed-- language arts, social studies

LA.A.1.2.2	LA.A.1.2.3	LA.A.1.2.4	LA.A.2.2.1	LA.A.2.2.2	LA.B.1.2.2
SS.A.1.2.1	SS.A.5.2.2	SS.B.1.2.1	SS.B.2.2.3	SS.B.2.2.4	SS.C.1.2.5

### Background:

On August 25, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed the act that created the National Park Service, a new federal bureau in the Department of the Interior responsible for protecting the 35 national parks and monuments then managed by the department as well as developing and managing any new parks created.

This act stated that the purpose of the parks was to “conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as to leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”

The National Park Service still strives to meet those original goals and more. While most of the first parks were primarily large natural areas in the west or eastern battlefields, in recent years the National Park Service has tried to expand its scope. Now you will find National Park areas that tell a wide range of America’s stories. Recent acquisitions have included “Brown vs the Board of Education National Historic Site, Rosie the Riveter/ World War II Homefront National Historic Park, Minuteman Missile National Historic Site, and New Orleans Jazz National Historic Park as the Park Service strives to preserve the heritage of the American people. Even stories which do not show the best side of America are included like Manzanar National Historic Site which tells of the interment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Even that is part of who we are.

Today, roughly 58% of the 384 park areas administered by the National Park Service have been set aside as symbols and evidence of our history and prehistory. Many of our natural parks contain historic places that represent important aspects of that history. Collectively, these places present an American history textbook, a textbook that educates us about the people, events, buildings, objects, landscapes, and artifacts of the American past and about the aspirations and actions that produced those tangible survivors.

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## Background, continued

### The National Park Service Ranger Hat



The Ranger hat is one of the most recognized symbols of the National Park Service. The first Ranger hats were soft felt campaign hats similar to those worn by the US Army and the Texas Rangers in the 1800s.

This style of hat was made famous by John B. Stetson, the American hat maker, who produced this style in 1863. His hats, made of wool felt, had creases in the front and back of the crown creating four dents that formed a peak. This style was nicknamed the "Montana peak" hat because it resembled the glacier peaks of Montana.

In 1916 this style became an official part of the National Park Service uniform and has changed very little since then. Today, however, the dents are factory made and the brim is stiff instead of soft and is wider to help protect the ranger's head from sun and rain. In addition to the winter felt hat, rangers now wear a lighter, airier model made of stiffened straw during the warmer months.

The Ranger hat is often called a "Smokey the Bear hat" because it is worn by Smokey Bear, the symbol of fire prevention of the U.S. Forest Service. Similar hats are also worn by military drill instructors and many law enforcement agencies, including the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

### The National Park Service Arrowhead

The Arrowhead was authorized as the official National Park Service emblem by the Secretary of the Interior on July 20, 1951 and registered by the U.S. Patent Office in 1965.

The sequoia tree and bison represent vegetation and wildlife. The mountains and water represent scenic and recreational values, and the arrowhead shape represents historical and archaeological themes.

(Note that sequoia cones are also found on the leather hatband and belt worn by National Park Service personnel.)



**Official Tag Line-- The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.**

## Answers

### National Park Trivia

National parks are located in 49 of the 50 states and also in Washington, DC, and in the US territories of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, and the US Virgin Islands. Can you discover the one state that does not have a national park area? Which state has the most National Park areas?

**Delaware has no National Park Areas. California has the most with 24.**

The largest National Park is Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve at 13,200,000 acres! Where is it located? What is it known for?

**Wrangell St. Elias is located in the southeast corner of the main part of Alaska and borders the Yukon Territory of Canada. It is known for its vast wilderness and tall mountains. Mt. St. Elias, the second tallest peak in the United States, is found here. This park also played a part in the Yukon gold rush of 1898 when people tried the impossible task of traversing these rugged mountains as a route to the gold fields. Later, copper was discovered, and copper mining became very important.**

The smallest is Thaddeus Kosciuszko National Memorial with only .02 acre. Where is this park located? Who was Thaddeus Kosciuszko?

**Thaddeus Kosciuszko National Memorial is located in Philadelphia, PA. Kosciuszko was a Polish patriot and hero of the American Revolution.**

In 2001, 279,873,926 people visited the National Parks of the United States. Were you one of these?

There are 15,730 permanent employees of the National Park Service, 5,548 temporary and seasonal employees, and over 90,000 volunteers!

### Activities/Discussion

[NOTE TO TEACHERS-- If you do not live in Florida, you can adapt these questions to parks in your state.]

- 1.) Research the answers to the questions asked in the "Trivia" section above.
- 2.) If National Parks preserve special places, what do you think is special about the Castillo de San Marcos and Fort Matanzas National Monuments? Why are they National Park areas?

**This answer will vary since different people will focus on different things, but some special things are-- (Children should come up with some good answers!)**

- They are Spanish forts, and Spanish structures are rare in the eastern United States.
- The Castillo is the oldest masonry fort in North America.
- The Castillo is the only original fort standing intact in the US from the 17<sup>th</sup> century.
- They are the only forts in the world made out of coquina stone.

- The garrison was "integrated" with people of different races serving together. It was not until after WWII that the US army was integrated.
- The Castillo is an excellent example of a complete star-shaped fort.
- Fort Matanzas is unique in its shape as well. Even throughout the Spanish empire there are few examples of a square watchtower like Matanzas.
- Neither fort was ever taken in battle.
- Fort Matanzas National Monument is important because of the endangered species which live there.
- The Castillo was in use continuously as a military installation for 228 years (1672-1900).
- Neither fort has ever been out of government ownership.
- They are both "real"--not copies or re-constructions.

- 3.) For discussion or writing: Why is it important to protect and preserve areas and ideas like the National Parks do? What might happen to historic buildings, endangered animals, fragile ecosystems, and wilderness areas if there were no National Parks.
- 4.) Think of all the people who work for the National Parks. Who pays their salaries? When you visit a National Park, you might meet a ranger. What does a park ranger do? What do you think are some of the other jobs that National Park Service employees do? (Hint-- the National Park Service is like a big business. Also, think of all the kinds of places that National Park areas protect.)

**Since the NPS is an agency of the Federal Government, salaries are paid by the US Congress from the taxes paid by workers in the United States. The parks belong to all of us!**

**Interpretive park rangers at Fort Matanzas do these things--**

- give talks and lead tours
- present education programs to school groups
- drive the boat
- perform minor maintenance on the boat
- keep the interpretive items at the fort clean; paint cannons
- write the park brochure and other handouts
- make copies of the handouts
- write education materials
- write and update the web page
- oversee black powder musket and cannon demonstrations
- present programs off-site, to community groups, etc.
- update bulletin boards
- make special displays when needed
- use the computer for all sorts of things--writing, keeping lists of schools, spreadsheets
- count donations
- work in the visitor center when needed
- do research
- perform first aid
- answer people's letters
- manage the volunteer program-- data base, scheduling, awards, etc.
- provide training to other staff on the process of interpretation
- keep track of statistics (how many people visit the park, ride the boat, etc.)

There are also law enforcement rangers who provide resource and visitor protection in the park. In some parks these people might patrol by boat, horse, or bicycle, as well as by car. There are maintenance people who provide all the grounds and restroom maintenance as well as carpentry, masonry, electrical work, and roads and trails. At headquarters, there is the park superintendent, secretary, personnel, budget, and procurement offices. Some parks, depending on their size and specialty, might have a computer specialist, curator, historian, research librarian, fire fighters, archaeologist, waste management specialist, geologist, biologist, cave specialist, life guards, radio operators, receptionist, public relations person, search and rescue people, auto mechanic, welder, mail clerk. . . and more!

5.) Find out about the other National Park areas in Florida (or in your state). There are nine more in addition to the Castillo de San Marcos and Fort Matanzas National Monuments. Where are they? What do they protect?

- **Big Cypress National Preserve, Ochopee--** protects the watershed for the everglades ecosystem and is home to several endangered species such as the Florida panther.
- **Biscayne National Park, Homestead--** protects the northernmost tropical reef in the US.
- **Canaveral National Seashore, Titusville--** protects 25 miles of undeveloped barrier island
- **De Soto National Memorial, Bradenton--** commemorates the 4-year, 2000 mile exploration of Hernando de Soto throughout the Southeast in 1539-1543.
- **Dry Tortugas National Park, Key West--** preserves historic Fort Jefferson, the largest brick fort in North America. Protects important nesting colonies for sea birds.
- **Everglades National Park, Homestead--** protects the largest wetlands in the United States.
- **Fort Caroline National Memorial, Jacksonville--** commemorates the founding of Fort Caroline by French Huguenots in 1564.
- **Gulf Islands National Seashore, Pensacola--** preserves historic Fort Pickens and miles of barrier island beaches both in Florida and in Mississippi.
- **Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve, Jacksonville--** protects some of the largest Indian shell mounds in North America as well as extensive salt marshes and a 19<sup>th</sup> century plantation

6.) Pick a state or territory and find out about one of the National Park areas there. You might even want to write to a ranger for more information. You can find park addresses on links from the web page below.

**You can find out a lot about National Parks on the National Park web page-- [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)**

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## America's Special Places-- The National Parks

What do you think of when you hear the words "National Park"? Many people immediately think of the big parks out west like Yellowstone, Yosemite, and the Grand Canyon. However, there are many smaller places like the Castillo de San Marcos and Fort Matanzas National Monuments which are also National Park areas.

As of January, 2002 there are 385 areas protected by the National Park Service in the United States. Some are the large areas called National Parks. Others are called National Monuments or National Memorials. There are also National Historic Sites, National Battlefields, National Recreation Areas, National Seashores, Rivers, and Lakeshores, and even National Parkways, Trails, and Preserves. Did you know that the President's home, the White House, is even a National Park?

So, what is the difference, and what is a National Park area, anyway? Maybe you have visited other National Parks. Can you think what they have in common? Is there something special about each one? Yes! National Park areas all protect something special or tell a story that is important in the history of the United States.

Some of these special things might be the huge sequoia trees of Sequoia National Park, the vast river of grass that is Everglades National Park, or the undeveloped beach of Padre Island National Seashore. Some of the special stories might be the story of the Alaska gold rush at Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Park, the story of the Civil Rights Movement at Martin Luther King National Historic Site, or of a great, but sad battle at Antietam National Battlefield. Indeed, we might say that, "the National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage."

The idea of a national park began over 100 years ago when people traveling in the new western territories of the United States were amazed by the awesome scenery. In 1872 Congress established Yellowstone National Park to be a park for the American people and to preserve some of this gorgeous and unique scenery. The park was placed under the administration of the Department of the Interior. Gradually, more national parks were named, and on August 25, 1916 the National Park Service was created as a division of the Department of the Interior to manage this growing number of special places. In 1933 other places such as Fort Matanzas and other decommissioned forts, which had been administered by the War Department, were also transferred to the National Park Service. Thus the founding of Yellowstone National Park began a worldwide movement. Today more than 100 countries contain some 1,200 national parks or preserves.

The key word concerning national parks is *preservation*. It was part of the original law creating the National Park Service that it would be created to "protect and preserve" these lands as well as help people enjoy them. That is why hunting or destructive activities are not allowed at most national parks. (Some national preserves, national recreation areas, and some seashores, lakeshores and rivers do allow some limited hunting, however, as these types of parks tend to be more recreational.)

You can help protect America's special places, too. Please do not bother the animals who live there, do not pick any flowers or plants or take home any bones, rocks, or other artifacts, and do not

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Keep the National Parks safe for your children and your children's

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- 5.) Find out about the other National Park areas in Florida. There are eleven of them! Where are they? What do they protect?
- 6.) Pick a state or territory and find out about one of the National Park areas there. You might even want to write to a ranger for more information. You can find park addresses on links from the web page below.

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